

Croton-Harmon Union Free School District



School Re-Opening Plan: Addendum 2020-21

March 11, 2021
Updated: April 15, 2021

Introduction

Since the close of schools in March 2020, the Croton-Harmon Union Free School District (CHUFSD) continues to evaluate the status of the pandemic and adjust our educational programs accordingly. We have continued to evolve as the pandemic evolved. In September 2020, we developed a [re-entry plan](#) that identified three scenarios for learning: Fully Remote, Hybrid, or Fully In-person (pp. 42-47). As a district we quickly learned that our planning needed to be solid and we needed to be ready to pivot from one learning model to another learning model should there be a need or community transmission. This Addendum should be reviewed along with the initial [re-entry plan](#), which details how the district monitors health conditions, contains potential transmission and employs its three learning models should there be widespread community transmission.

In recent weeks districts in Westchester County as well as some surrounding counties have been engaging in dialogue about the return to Full Time In-Person for students. This is coupled with parent/community rallies asking for districts to bring students back to school full time. We can all agree that having all of our students back in school, together, has been and continues to be our goal in the Croton-Harmon School District. Together, we remain committed to bring our students back to school five days a week; however, we must continue in a thoughtful manner, keeping the physical health, mental wellbeing and safety of our students and staff at the forefront.

Review of Guidance Through April 8, 2021

Review of the current information regarding COVID-19 mitigation measures continues to be a focus of the CHUFSD. As we engaged in discussions, we referenced the following:

New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

[INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AT PRE-K TO GRADE 12 SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY](#)

Pg. 2: Social Distancing: Responsible Parties must maintain protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities. Specifically, appropriate social distancing means six feet of space in all directions between individuals or use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk. If used, physical barriers must be put in place in accordance with United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines, and may include strip curtains, cubicle walls, plexiglass or similar materials, or other impermeable divider or partition.

New York State Education Department (NYSED)

[RECOVERING, REBUILDING, AND RENEWING: THE SPIRIT OF NEW YORK'S SCHOOLS REOPENING GUIDANCE](#)

Pg. 18: District/school plan has written protocol to ensure all persons in school buildings keep social distance of at least 6 feet whenever possible.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[HOW DO I SET UP MY CLASSROOM? A quick guide for teachers](#)

Modify learning stations and activities so that there are fewer students per group and students can be at least 6 feet apart, if possible. When it is difficult to space students at least 6 feet apart, use physical barriers, such as a sneeze guard or partition.

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

[COVID 19 Guidance for Safe Schools](#)

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), "Physical distance between desks should follow current public health guidance, and desks should be placed at least 3 feet apart and ideally 6 feet apart. In many jurisdictions, cloth face coverings are mandatory for children in public settings, including schools." The AAP continues to strongly advocate that all policy considerations for school COVID-19 plans should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.

Recently the AAP shared area superintendents received a [statement](#) from the New York Chapter of AAP urging that students return to Full Time In-Person Learning and they call upon the NYSDOH to help facilitate this move.

NYSDOH Guidance April 9, 2021

In summary, [this document](#) still stresses the importance of layered mitigation strategies as a key component for opening schools, for example, strict protocols for wearing face masks, physical distancing, strict health screening, hygiene/cleaning/disinfecting protocols, testing protocols in place, cohorting to the extent possible, and review of ventilation practices. In this document, NYSDOH states that districts may reduce the distance between students below six feet; however, the distance between adults to students, adults to adults, and cohort to cohort should continue to stay at six feet. As always, districts are encouraged to continue dialogue with their local departments of health to discuss strategies and local community transmission rates.

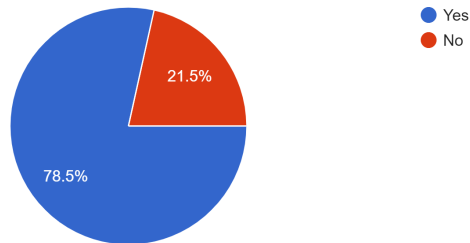
Stakeholder Engagement - Our Process

Stakeholder feedback is central to our work in CHUFSD. At our February 23rd CHUFSD Re-Entry Task Force meeting we discussed the regional topic of reopening schools five days a week. At this meeting the Task Force recommended that a family survey should be sent out in order to obtain an insight into our community's interest in students returning to school. We then reviewed the survey concept at the Board of Education meeting on February 25th. Based on a recommendation from the CHUFSD Re-Entry Task Force and Board of Education discussion, on February 26, 2021 we surveyed parents to determine their interest in full time in-person learning.

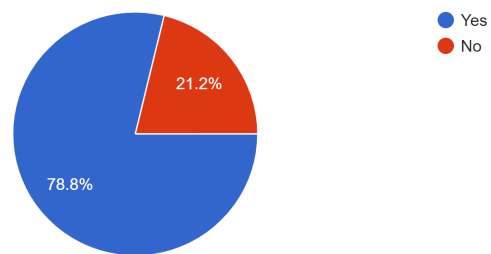
Once receiving the results, Dr. O'Connell invited all faculty/staff to a meeting to review the results as well as, offer input on the concept of full time in-person learning. This was followed by a meeting with a smaller group of faculty/staff leaders to further refine the input. We reconvened the CHUFSD Task Force to review the survey results and once again asked for input on the concept of full time in-person learning. Using input from stakeholders, our administrative council continued its discussions about a full time return to in-person learning.

Survey

If your child is in grades 3-12, would you return your child to school this Spring for five days of instruction per week with the understanding that social distancing would be less than six feet?



If your child is in grades K-2, would you have your child attend school in-person if all the students in their class are in the same room and social distancing is less than six feet?



Based upon our commitment to maximizing a student’s education, the renewed review of guidance, our review of pandemic status with Dr. Mier, the onset of staff vaccinations, as well as the expressed interest of our community, the CHUFSD Administrative Council began working with stakeholders on developing a plan for full time in-person learning. A brief summary is included here:

February 23, 2021	Re-Entry Task Force Meeting to discuss Full Time In-Person Learning Model Transition
February 26, 2021	Launched interest survey to see if families wanted to return to Full Time In-Person Learning Model which would reduce distance between students from 6ft to 3 ft. Additional Question Posed: Is there any other feedback that you would like to provide to help inform our thinking?
March 4, 2021	Meeting with All-CHUFSD staff to review Full Time In-Person Learning Model Transition and offer opportunities to provide feedback
March 8, 2021	Key Stakeholder Group - Continue Discussion Full Time In-Person Learning Model - review feedback and offer solutions
March 8, 2021	Re-Entry Task Force Meeting - continue discussion Full Time In-Person Learning Model Transition - review survey, feedback and solutions
March 11, 2021	Board of Education Meeting - Review of Full Time In-Person Learning Model & Transition
March 15, 2021	District Launched Informational Video for Families
March 16, 2021	Informational Meetings for Families: Building-specific 5 p.m. - PVC: 6 p.m. - CHHS: 7 p.m. - CET:

March 16, 2021	Principals Sent out Formal Commitment Form to Families (due back 3/22/21)
March 17, 2021	CHHS Informational Meeting with Your Principal/Assistant Principal (9:00 a.m.)
March 18 2021	CET Informational Meeting with Your Principal/Assistant Principal (9:00 a.m.)
March 19, 2021	PVC Informational Meeting with Your Principal/Assistant Principal (9:00 a.m.)
March 25, 2021 -	BOE Meeting: Superintendent provided updates to Full Time In-Person Learning Model
April 8, 2021	BOE Meeting: Superintendent provided updates to Full Time In-Person Learning Model

The Plan for Full Time In-Person Learning

As identified in our September re-entry plan, the Full In-Person Learning Model calls for students to return to the classroom at full capacity while continuing social distancing practice to the greatest extent possible, while maintaining health/safety measures in all of our schools. In this model, students would return to school five days a week and the hybrid cohorts would no longer exist and a remote option would remain. In order for this transition to occur students would no longer be six feet apart in the classroom in many cases. [This video](#), that was provided to our school community, overviews many of these following topics:

Health and Safety Practices

The district has put many measures and practices in place to respond to the pandemic. These practices would remain undisturbed in the implementation of our Full Time In-Person Learning Model. These include:

- Daily health screenings of students and staff
- Monitoring for Covid-like symptoms and adhering to return to school/work protocols
- Handwashing protocols
- Mask wearing ([Feb. 13, 2021 CDC Updated Guidance](#))
- Hallway protocols
- Social distancing protocols
- Response to COVID+ (isolation, contact tracing for needed quarantining, etc.)
- Cleaning routines

We anticipate that we may still identify COVID positive individuals in our Full Time In-Person Learning Model. We have solid protocols and practices in place (isolation rooms, contact tracing and quarantining) to mitigate the spread in school. These protocols and practices will continue. [See Full Re-entry Plan](#)

Mitigation Measures

Our plan includes reinforcing the above stated mitigation strategies while layering additional strategies into our practice. These include:

- Continued Masking - Expectations for the utilization of masks would remain unchanged. As per our current practice, face masks are required at all times unless a student is eating or drinking.
- Physical Barriers - appropriate physical barriers between individuals will be used where there is less than six feet of space in between individuals. Although not a recommendation based on the April 9, 2021 memorandum from NYSDOH, we will continue to use barriers until further notice, as the ones we have purchased do not impede ventilation.
- Ventilation - In addition to the current systems in place for air handling, we are approaching a time of year where we will be increasing ventilation through the opening of windows. We also have a strict replacement schedule for our MERV-13 filters.
- Surveillance Testing for COVID-19 - Using New York State's supply of BinaxNOW Rapid Card Tests, we will continue the implementation of surveillance testing, with a goal of testing a percentage of students or faculty/staff weekly.
- COVID-19 Vaccinations - We continue to share resources and facilitate our staff in obtaining appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Space Configurations

Our principals have been working with our buildings and grounds team to review every classroom in terms of space and have been outlining how to accommodate a full student return to school. Based on the number of students in each room, along with the size of the classroom, desks/tables will be arranged to accommodate maximum separation between students. In most cases this will be below the six foot distance.

Building Schedules

In making this transition to our Full Time In-Person Learning Model, our goal is to maintain schedules similar to those we have used all year for our students and staff. Our teachers have been planning units around these schedules and our students have grown accustomed to them and we believe this is important to maintain as much as possible.

In returning to the Full Time In-Person Learning Model, there will no longer be the hybrid model (Croton Cohort/Harmon Cohort) as students will be back in their classrooms five days a week. Our goal is to keep all students with their current teacher. At this point we cannot rule out the possibility of a teacher change based on the number of students that opt to return to full time learning. Our principal will discuss any specific issues directly with families. Our plan continues to provide interaction between our in-person students and our remote students as there is the potential to have live streaming in every classroom.

Mental Health

Our goal is to reconnect our students with their teachers, school community, and peers. We will continue our practices to check-in on students regarding their mental wellbeing and offer support, as appropriate, should any need be identified.

Wednesday Schedule

Wednesday afternoons are currently utilized for many key functions such as specials, student meetings, the performing arts, and most importantly it is a dedicated time for personal teacher attention to remote learners. When our Full Time In-Person learning begins, students at PVC and CHHS will have an in-person morning schedule and a virtual afternoon schedule. Students at CET (grades K-4) will have a full day in-person schedule.

Lunch and Snack Time

Since lunch requires the removal of a mask for an extended period of time (more than 10 minutes), our plan includes having students eat lunch in a larger space outside of the classroom that can accommodate for a 6 foot distance between students. There will also be barriers set up in these larger spaces. At the high school, campus will remain closed for the time being and students will be encouraged to eat outside on our campus when possible. Given the variables involved in this re-entry plan, we will not be introducing a change to our closed campus at this time. We will consider re-evaluating this over time.

Snack time will occur outside of the classroom based on the recent guidance memorandum. As weather continues to improve, classes would be encouraged to hold their snack time outside whenever possible.

Outdoors

As we move towards the warmer months, teachers may continue to choose to take their students outside for class. NYSED regulations regarding the usage of tents, sun glare on computer screens, and limited wi-fi access does not permit for the creation of outdoor classrooms, but the outdoors provides a venue for both recreation and dedicated learning events. The technology department is generating heat maps of the capacity of our access points so that we can gauge our capacity to handle outdoor learning events.

Transportation

Those families who choose to send their child(ren) back to full time, in-person learning model will be polled as to whether or not they will be utilizing transportation. These data will be used to determine the most advantageous seating plans on buses that maximize social distancing.

Remote Learning Option

Remote learning remains an option for families who do not wish to have their child(ren) return to in-person learning for the remainder of this school year. We will build on existing classroom configurations, maintaining all remote and concurrent classrooms, and possibly add live streaming of instruction in other classes on the grade level, if needed.

Implementation Calendar

This year's Spring Break is scheduled for March 27 through April 5. After careful review of feedback provided by parents, faculty/staff and the CHUFSD Re-Entry Task Force, we would delay any start to the Full Time Learning Model to the week of April 19th. Here is a proposed timeline for transitioning to our Full Time In-Person Learning Model:

Mon. 4/19/21	Professional Development & Transition Day for All Staff - No School for Students - Expansion of the Croton-Harmon Surveillance Testing Program Begins (see below)
Tues. 4/20/21	Students in Grades K-12 return to Full Time In-Person Learning Model
Wed. 4/21/21	Early Dismissal K-12 (CET-11:45; PVC & CHHS (11:00) - Transition Afternoon for Staff
All Wednesdays	From 4/28 - end of the school year PVC & CHHS - In-Person Morning Schedule (ends 11:30); Virtual - Afternoon Schedule CET will continue with full days of in-person instruction on Wednesdays

In order to provide enough time for our faculty and staff to prepare for this transition, April 19th will be a transition day for staff and students will not have school on this day. On April 20th, students in grades K-12 will return to Full Time In-Person Learning. On April 21st, all students in grades K-12 will have an early dismissal so faculty and staff can continue their work with transitioning to the Full Time In-Person Model. Finally, all Wednesdays at **PVC and CHHS** (starting on April 28th) students will follow a half day in-person schedule in the morning and half day virtual schedule in the afternoon.

Monitoring the COVID Virus In Schools and Community

A part of our daily protocols at each school and the district, is to monitor attendance and the possible spread of the COVID virus within our schools. As a district, we continue to examine community spread of the virus by checking the NYS website dashboard which details information by county ([New York State Percentage Positivity Results by County Dashboard](#)).

Dr. O'Connell, along with area superintendents, meet with Westchester County Executive George Latimer and his team each week to review positivity rates and other pertinent details related to the virus. Mr. Griffiths, our school nurses, as well as Dr. O'Connell, have frequent discussions with Dr. Mier (our district physician) to discuss COVID related matters. Our district team also communicates with the Westchester County Department of Health when appropriate. As mentioned earlier, we have processes and protocols in place to keep the lines of communication open and available when needed. As we move to Full Time In-Person Learning, these communication channels will continue and will be used to monitor the status of the COVID virus. As we have done since our September opening, we must always be ready to pivot to one of our learning models in the event that we begin to see community spread and most importantly, spread within our schools. As a reminder, we have three learning models in our [Re-Entry plan](#): Fully Remote, Hybrid, and Full Time In-Person.

Surveillance Testing Program

Since February 10, 2021 we have been piloting our Croton-Harmon Surveillance Testing Program and have tested approximately 190 students. On April 19, 2021 we are ready to expand our voluntary testing program. [Click here](#) to see an introductory letter to our program. The Croton-Harmon Surveillance Testing Program will continue through June 2021.

Communication to Families About Full Time In-Person Model

As we provided with our initial reopening plan, we will schedule several informational meetings so that parents can obtain not only a district-wide perspective but also discuss building level planning and implications with their principals. Parents will be provided an opportunity to ask their principals specific questions about their planning.

3/15/21	District to Launch Informational Video for Families
3/16/21	Informational Meetings for Families: Building-specific 5 p.m. - PVC 6 p.m. - CHHS 7 p.m. - CET
3/16/21	Principals to send out Formal Commitment Form to Families (due back 3/22/21)
3/17/21	CHHS Informational Meeting with Your Principal/Assistant Principal (9:00 a.m.)
3/18/21	CET Informational Meeting with Your Principal/Assistant Principal (9:00 a.m.)
3/19/21	PVC Informational Meeting with Your Principal/Assistant Principal (9:00 a.m.)

After the informational meetings, we will be asking families to commit to a learning model, either the Full Time In-Person Learning Model or the Fully Remote Learning Model. Families will complete a commitment form and submit no later than March 22nd. Important note: we are asking families to make a commitment for the remainder of the school year.

Communicating COVID-19 Positive Cases

As a district we feel it is important for families to have information about COVID positive cases in our schools. Daily, when school is in session, Mr. Griffiths reports all positive cases to the NYSDOH. This daily information can be located [here](#). Principals will also include building specific information in their weekly letters to families.

Recommendation

Based upon the development and review of the above plans, the Administrative Council recommends the full reopening of schools while still providing a remote option for families through June 2021.